LIGHTING THE WAY 1853-2003

GARY

MEMORIAL

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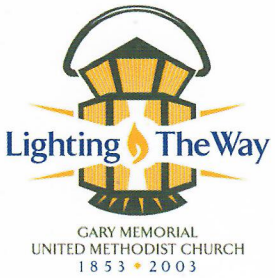

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Gary Memorial United
Methodist Church

GARY MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

A BRIEF HISTORY

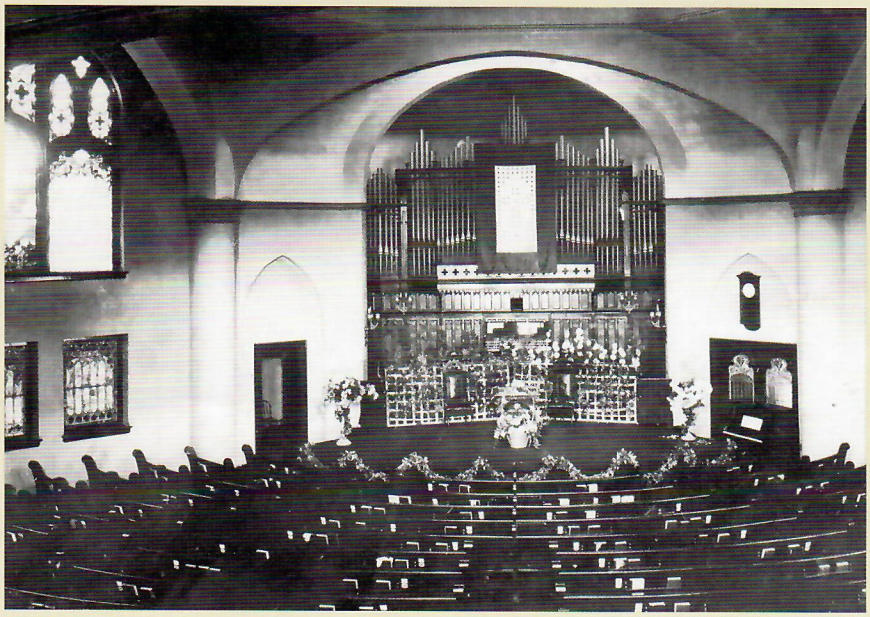
On a typical January night in 1929, the temperature was ten degrees below zero in Wheaton, Illinois. At forty minutes past midnight, two Wheaton College students were returning from Chicago on a late train. As they walked along Main Street, they saw smoke pouring from the windows of Gary Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church. They awakened the pastor in the parsonage next door (now the Wesley Shoppe) who called the fire department.

Smoke billows from the January 7, 1929 fire of the Gary Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church.

But it was too late. By one-thirty that Monday morning the huge Romanesque structure, one of the most impressive in either Chicago or the suburbs, was a mass of ruins.

Before the fire, our second building was built on the current church site in 1901 by Elbert Gary and donated in honor of his parents. The church was a magnificent building in the Romanesque style of architecture.

The previous day, January 6, the Feast of Epiphany, had been a typical Sunday for the growing congregation of Gary Church. The Sacrament of Holy Communion had been celebrated in the morning



The interior of our second church which seated 1500 people. The largest building in DuPage County at the time, the church was used for graduation ceremonies and other public events, so the entire community mourned its loss.

worship service, and the evening service, with singing and preaching, had been well attended. But now the church building, the symbol of history and prosperity, of worship and education, service and mission was gone.

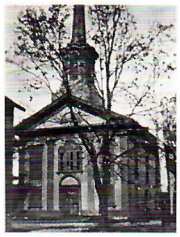
The cornerstone for the building had been laid on October 27, 1900, and on December 22, the Fourth Sunday of Advent, 1901, the building was dedicated. A glorious week of special events, including an organ recital and a reunion of former pastors had marked the occasion.

The cost of the building, $83,386, had been given by Judge Elbert H. Gary to honor his parents, Erastus and Susan A. Valette Gary, two of Wheaton's founders. Judge Gary's intelligence, energy and commitment had brought him to the pinnacle of American success. A lawyer, entrepreneur and DuPage county judge for eight years, he had negotiated the merger of several iron

"Beginners" Sunday School class taken in the early 1920's with the church building in background.

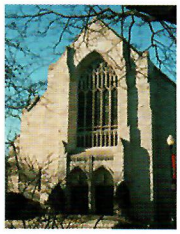
GUIDE TO THE GARY CHURCH BUILDINGS

1860 - 1901
First Methodist Episcopal Church of Wheaton



1901 - 1929
Gary Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church

1930 - present
Gary Memorial Methodist Church (became *United* Methodist in 1968)



Elbert Gary as a younger man, probably around 26 years old. DuPage County Judge, founder of the town's first bank and Wheaton's first mayor, he would later become one of the nation's top industrialists in his role as CEO of U.S. Steel.

and steel companies into the huge combine, U.S. Steel, and had been named its chief executive officer. He lived in a large brick home at the site of Wheaton's current Memorial Park until he moved to

Elbert Gary's parents and founding settlers of Wheaton, Susan and Erastus Gary.

Manhattan in 1898. There he associated with J.P. Morgan (Gary was the only man who had the audacity to call J.P. "Pierpont"), Andrew Carnegie and President Theodore Roosevelt (whose regard jeopardized Gary's relationships with other captains of industry).

When Judge Gary gave the building in their honor, the church had been renamed for his parents, two devout Methodists who had taught him strong moral and religious values. Erastus Gary had settled on a farm near Warrenville when he came to the American West in 1831, followed shortly by his friends from Pomfret, Connecticut, Jesse and Warren Wheaton, who also claimed land in the Wheaton area. But when the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad (note that Galena came first, because it was the more important town) was slated to link Lake Michigan with the Mississippi River, Gary moved in 1849 to farmland he had earlier purchased adjacent to the Wheaton brothers' claim.

Erastus had grown up as the Erie Canal was being built, and he was nineteen on the day in 1825 Governor DeWitt Clinton had brought four barrels of

Lake Erie water and poured them into the Hudson River, inaugurating a new era in American commerce. But Erastus Gary knew that the day of digging canals was over by the mid-nineteenth century. The future was in railroads.

And in Methodism. The Wesleyan movement had accompanied folks like the Garys and the Wheatons as they moved west. The first circuit rider to come west on his horse from Chicago (then a small town of 3,000 people) to Naperville to establish a Methodist circuit recorded in his journal that the prairie grass was higher than his horse's head. The Methodists met weekly in classes, groups of not more than twelve frontier Christians who read the Bible, sang hymns, discussed doctrine and held one another morally accountable. When enough folks formed enough classes, then a circuit of two, three, four or more churches was devised.

One such class on the DuPage Circuit began at Gary's Mills (near West Chicago) in 1836. Charles Gary's large home provided room for the itinerant preacher as well as a thriving

JESSE WHEATON

WARREN WHEATON

The Wheaton brothers, Warren and Jesse, followed ~~Erastus~~ Gary to Wheaton from Pomfret, Connecticut.

This portrait of Elbert Gary hangs in the church today.

Judge Gary on one of his frequent visits to Wheaton after moving to New York. Gary often credited his strong moral and Methodist upbringing in Wheaton for his business success.

Plans for our first church building began in 1855, and construction started in 1857, but the financial panic of that year caused the building fund to shrink and the unfinished building was abandoned for three years until members could complete it in 1860.

Sunday School. The Garys and Wheatons were active members of this class, and as they transferred their energies to the building of Wheaton, they became the nucleus for a Wheaton class of Methodists.

By 1853 the town of Wheaton was large enough and enough Methodists had evangelized to form the Methodist Episcopal Church. Having previously met in the train depot, they now met in the town's school house. Now they talked about building their own church, and the cornerstone was laid on October 17, 1857 on land donated by Jesse Wheaton. The contract price for the building was $3,500 — $2,000 to be paid upon enclosure, $1,000 to be paid when it was plastered and the last $500 upon completion.

It is a remarkable fact of God's Providence that in the case of both that first building and our present structure, a Depression (or Panic as it was called in 1857) tried the faith and tested

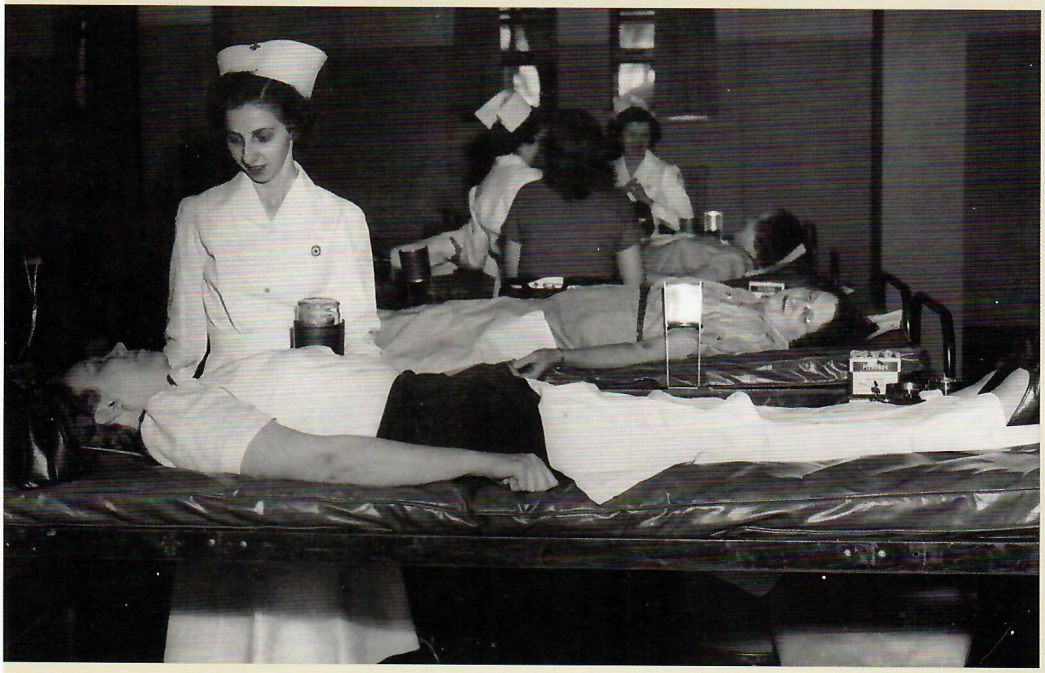
The Gary Church Ladies Aid Society shown here in front of President Elsie Gary's home in 1929, was an essential fundraising group for the church, contributing more than $24,000 over a 7 year period towards retiring the church mortgage.

Our third church building, still in use today, was built in 1930 in the Perpendicular Gothic style of architecture.

the resilience of the Methodists. Just as in 1857, when the Methodists building fund shrank to $600, so in 1929, the trustees of Gary Church optimistically met twenty-four hours after the fateful fire and passed a resolution to rebuild immediately, only to be confronted by the news on the morning of October 24, when the American prosperity of the twenties plummeted.

In March, 1929, the situation looked bright. Three months after the fire, the Methodists had pledged $165,000 and

Built as a private residence in 1897, the current Wesley Shoppe was purchased by the church in 1925 to be used as a parsonage. During the 1929 church fire, some of the minister's belongings were flung from the windows out of fear that the fire would consume the parsonage as well.



A Red Cross Mobile Blood Bank was set up in the church during the 50's with the Wheaton American Legion and V.F.W. Auxiliaries and posts. In 1952, 329 volunteers collected blood from 556 donors.

$100,000 in insurance had been collected on the previous building. The new church cost $300,000, and it was consecrated on October 19, 1930, by Bishop Edwin Holt Hughes.

As thirty billion dollars in stock values vanished ten days later, Gary Church faced one financial crisis after another. Not only did the church have a substantial debt, but most of those faithful members who had made pledges found themselves unable to meet them. Bondholders in Chicago were threatening foreclosure.

A mayor of Wheaton and the member for whom Gamon Hall was named, William Gamon was instrumental in leading the church through financially tough times.

Last-minute negotiations in 1933 and again in 1943 brought some relief, but every effort—bake sales, auctions of services, suppers, hobby shows, penny banks—was made to raise money.

The Second World War changed Wheaton, and church finances took a back seat to the war effort. Red Cross units met

Founded in 1937 as an urgently needed church fundraiser, the Antique and Hobby Show was a popular community event for 16 years.

in the basement of Gary Church, 138 women knitted, sewed and folded bandages, and between 1940 and 1945, they gave 67,400 volunteer hours. And, of course, dozens

In 1953, the church celebrated its centennial with a week-long celebration.

of young men and women from the congregation served in both the Pacific and European theaters. Several never returned to their hometown.

After the war, Wheaton began its most rapid growth. Just as Judge Gary had been one of the first commuters to Chicago (he vividly remembered arriving there on October 8, 1871, when his train was delayed at Canal Street, where he learned that Chicago was burning), now many business people stood on the train platform every morning. New enterprises opened, the schools burgeoned, building codes couldn't keep up with growth, over three hundred new homes a year were constructed, cultural and social and religious life expanded.

Centennial events included a pageant/drama based on the history of the church. Here church members portraying the Gary and Wheaton families pose for a photo after reenacting the 1853 meeting at Jesse Wheaton's home when our church was organized.

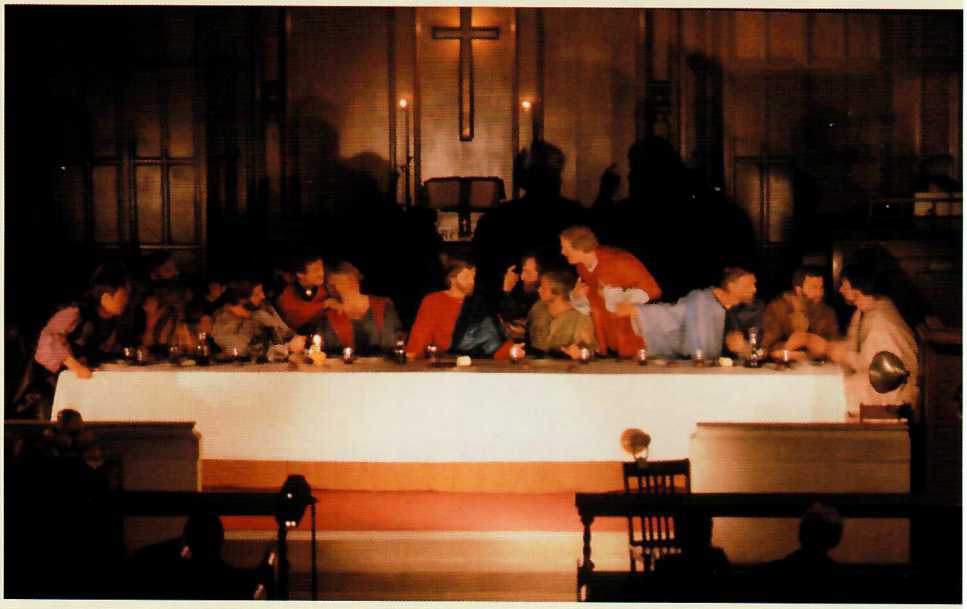
Our church has sponsored Boy Scout Troop 35 for 80 years providing the facility for many young men to grow physically, mentally and spiritually. One hundred and sixteen have reached the highest rank of Eagle Scout. Many have reached new levels in personal achievement through merit badge requirements and some have enjoyed the rugged hike through Philmont Ranch in New Mexico, as shown in this picture. Cub Scout Pack 335 for younger boys was added in 1982 , and Brownie Troop 1328 for young girls was added in 2001.

And Gary Church grew in numbers of members, leadership in the conference and the community and in its commitment to mission. Out of our life new congregations were formed: St. Andrew United Methodist Church in Carol Stream and Aldersgate Church in Wheaton. Missions to Arkhangelsk, Russia and Guatemala, countless work trips to build homes with Habitat for Humanity in places like Wilmington, North Carolina and Paducah, Kentucky, have inspired many of our youth with commitment and memories to last a lifetime, encouraging them into adult leadership in churches across the country for years to come.

We celebrate 150 years.
We celebrate all the visionary and intrepid people called Methodist whose commitment of money, time, talent and plain old Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday evening, countless meetings to plan and work have brought us to 2003.

God calls Gary Church into a new era, a twenty-first century marked by wars, disruptions, economic chaos, an environment threatened by pollution and industrial waste, a growing disparity between the rich and the poor, the worldwide AIDS crisis, as well as

In the 1970's Gary Church had a very active refugee assistance program, with refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia. In this photo Bob and Jan Allen join some Cambodian friends for their New Year's celebration.



Da Vinci's "Last Supper", a study in Christian discipleship, was presented by twelve men of our congregation during Holy Week of the 1980's and 1990's.

new technologies, constantly changing lifestyles, an Internet world shrinking every day and a United Methodist denomination calling us to new forms of ministry and mission.

While human nature does not drastically change, the way we understand and live out our spiritual lives is different in 2003 than it was when we celebrated our 100th anniversary fifty years ago. Gary Church now serves in an age of church shoppers, mainline Protestant Christians who search for meaning in their lives and who want a church that is open, honest, missional, committed to excellence in worship, education and music, a church that allows and encourages its members to think together, to pray, to serve.

Beautiful floral displays have become an Easter tradition in the church.

GARY CHURCH TODAY

Gary Church's music ministry has evolved to include many children and adult choir and bell choir programs. Here the Chancel Choir sings a cantata at Christmas.

Gary Church is centered in a building so enthusiastically and optimistically constructed on the eve of a cataclysmic moment in American history. The stained glass windows that have been installed over the past fifty years tell not only the story of faith but also the story of a changing, growing congregation. The congregation is vital, talented, committed, growing and faithful. We are a people called Methodist who live in God's grace—prevenient (going before us), justifying (changing us), sanctifying (making us grow and calling us to new visions). We have much to celebrate, but it is more than a past. It is the future to which God calls us and into which God will lead us.

Gary missions reach worldwide. Here some church members are shown with children and adults from the Guatemala Fundaninos Orphanage in front of the building project the group worked on.

As part of the Russian Initiative program, Gary Church sends delegations to Arkhangelsk, Russia, to help with orphanages and emerging ministries there.

Bethlehem Marketplace, a walk-through interactive drama begun in 1973, provides a moving experience for hundreds of visitors during the Christmas Season.

Elizabeth Stewart organizes a selection of toys for the community-wide Christmas Sharing program, begun at Gary Church in 1969 to provide food, clothing and Christmas cheer to 7 needy families. In 2002, the program served more than 600 families.

Sunday School, Children's Worship, Wednesday Evening Jesus and Me programs, Vacation Bible School (called B.L.A.S.T. Camp for Blessings, Laughs and Special Times) youth music programs and numerous special events keep the children of our church growing in faith year-round.

The church's 150th anniversary was commemorated by a year-long series of events, including a float in Wheaton's July 4th parade, depicting both a pioneer and a modern family.

Another 2003 Sesquicentennial event was an old-fashioned Methodist Camp Meeting and picnic. Pictured here are songleader Rob Alton and Pastors Sandra Sagehorn, Chris Winkler and Ed Taveirne.

Gary members Bill and Vickie Austin welcomed refugees from Liberia, Gus and Clarence Porter, into our church family in 2002.

One of many area mission programs supported by Gary Church, Public Action to Deliver Shelter (P.A.D.S.) ministers to the homeless. Members regularly volunteer to prepare meals and provide shelter in the church. Barbara Holmes is shown here readying a sleeping area.

Gary youth stay busy with yearlong worship and fun, and summer mission trips like this one to Appalachia.

THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS OF GARY MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Gary Church could be called a "cathedral of enlightenment." The ten stained glass windows on the north and south walls of the nave are organized symmetrically and symbolically with Christ in the center window of each wall. Each Christ window is flanked by two of the Gospel writers. The two remaining windows at the east end of the nave feature the traditional founders of the Christian church, Peter and Paul. The remaining windows at the west end of the nave feature two of the great Christian evangelists, Martin Luther and John Wesley.

Designed to showcase stained glass, our current church built in 1930 remained an austere sanctuary during the financially difficult 1930's and 40's. This 1952 photo of the church shows the Rose Window, the only original stained glass window and the first donated window (Christ the Good Shepherd) installed in 1950 on the left.

In the narthex are two windows depicting subject matter not addressed in the sanctuary windows. On the north wall is Moses, a man of deep faith from the Old Testament. On the south wall, four women of the Bible are featured in the "Mary window."

From the balcony, scenes and symbols of Christ's ministry are depicted as the brilliant colors of the Great East Window envelop the sanctuary below and set the tone for worship.

Today our stained glass windows provide a visual Biblical history and inspiration. This is a view from the pulpit during a sermon by guest speaker Tony Campolo, well-known Christian author and evangelist.

The Rose Window above the altar faces the Great East Window across the length of the sanctuary.

The stained glass windows of Gary Church are so thoughtfully organized and unified in style that it appears they were all installed at the same time. This is far from the case. The building was constructed in 1930 at the beginning of the Great Depression. The only window in place was the Rose Window. As the Depression worsened, members could not honor their financial pledges to offset the mortgage debt. The church sanctuary, specifically designed for the use of stained glass windows, became "the sanctuary of potentially beautiful plain glass windows."

Fifteen years after the church was built, another stained glass window (The Great East Window) was given to the church in 1945. Not until 1950 was a window (Christ the Good Shepherd) installed in the nave of the sanctuary. The last stained glass window (Mary) was dedicated to the church in 1995, completing the architect's 1930 vision of his award-

winning "Perpendicular Gothic" church design. The stained glass windows of Gary Church are rich statements of Christian doctrine and church history. Understanding the roles played by color and symbolism in the windows lets the light shine through to our understanding of the stories and the truth of our faith.

Giannini and Hilgart, Inc., of Chicago created the windows on the north and south walls of the sanctuary and narthex. The Great East window was created by Arthur Michaudel Stained Glass Studio, Inc., of Chicago. The Rose Window was designed by Charles J. Connick of Boston who also designed the rose windows in St. Patrick's Cathedral and the Church of St. John the Divine in New York City. The images of the windows which follow are presented in the order they were given to the church.

Placement Chart of the stained glass windows of Gary Church